

Safe and Healthy Schools





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Staff from the California Department of Education

Mary Tobias Weaver, Program Administrator, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office

James Bellotti, Consultant, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office

Vivian Linfor, Education Program Assistant, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office

Karen Lowrey, Consultant, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office

Emily Nahat, Consultant, Child, Youth, and Family Services Branch

Roberta Peck, Consultant, Healthy Start Office

Staff from Local Educational Agencies

Sharon Burnis, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative and Pupil Services, Modesto City Schools

Chuck Corr, Director, Business Support Services, Cupertino Union School District

Judy Gestring, Assistant Principal, James Logan High School, New Haven Unified School District

John Gibson, Principal, East Bakersfield High School, Kern High School District

Jim Koedyker, Field Consultant, Riverside County Office of Education

Michael Malcolm, Assistant Principal, Student Activities, James Logan High School, New Haven Unified School District

Garry Schneider, Principal, Pierce High School, Pierce Joint Unified School District

Bill Ybarra, Consultant, Attendance and Administrative Services, Educational Support Services, Los Angeles County Office of Education

Greg Zavala, Gang Intervention Office, Stockton Unified School District

Introduction

The Challenge calls for us all—students, parents, educators, and communities—to embrace a simple but powerful concept: that we measure success by gains in student achievement based on standards.

—Delaine Eastin
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Safe and Healthy Schools provides basic information on developing safe and healthy schools, identifies steps and considerations for developing plans for such schools, describes key issues in implementing those plans, provides sample resources and materials that schools and districts can use directly when they begin to examine their campus safety and student behaviors in a comprehensive manner, and identifies specific questions and answers related to safe and healthy schools.

The School as a Buffer

The fact that children come to school from a challenging and increasingly complex world is one of the most compelling reasons for schools to make children's health and safety a major priority. Schools can be a safe harbor for children and a buffer against the world's pressures. Seen in this way, schools are the single most logical place, in addition to the family and in close partnership with families, in which to address the wide range of children's needs, including their need for physical, social, and emotional health.

To ask schools to play the role of buffer against society's ills without providing additional support *would* be unreasonable, however. The need to involve a broad spectrum of participants, linking the school and the community, is a theme of many of today's forward-looking policies and programs directed at youths and families.

Increasingly, advocates of children's health are recognizing that effective approaches must create linkages among all the elements in a child's world that can affect the child's health and well-being.

By promoting the health and well-being of children, the safe and healthy school helps to prevent serious and potentially costly problems, such as substance abuse and other negative, self-destructive behavior that might occur later in a child's life. A safe and healthy school enhances, not just children's learning, but children's potential to live healthy and productive lives as adults.¹

Characteristics of Safe and Healthy Schools

Safe and healthy schools are orderly and purposeful places in which students and staff practice healthful behaviors and are free to learn and teach without the threat of physical or psychological harm. Such schools have developed a strong sense of community. They show signs of student affiliation and bonding to the school and sensitivity and respect for all persons, including those of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Safe and healthy schools provide an environment of nonviolence, set clear behavioral expectations, institute disciplinary policies that are consistently and fairly administered, and accord recognition for positive behavior. These schools have established policies for proactive security procedures; emergency response plans; the timely maintenance, cleanliness, and attractive appearance of the campus and classrooms; and systems to promote the health of students and adults.

¹The source of this section is *Toward Healthy Schools: The Future Is Now*. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1992.